

# Creating Sacred Experience for Xi Qinglin Temple of Guilin

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## Abstract

When Chinese think of Buddhist temple landscape, the image of Chinese Buddhist style in the mainland that is as cultural identity occurs to their perception. But one thing that has been forgotten is the China of Multicultural that has been evolved through the Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism of improvement, they have impacted each other in the various aspects of cultural integration. As a result, the development of the Chinese Buddhist Temple landscape can only be done by some “routine design style” into the present Chinese Buddhist temple form, which turns to be a Weak identity of the temple landscape. Chinese Buddhist identity is different from other countries. That has been evolved through an improved process. Chinese have seen hidden meaning as a pearl of intangible wisdom under cultural aesthetics. Due to this meaning, The connection between the Chinese Buddhist temple architecture and the landscape is interrupted, which is Chinese have seen “Buddhist Temple aesthetic” that has been “Lost identities” is considered by researchers. This research is intended to creating a designed way of Buddhist temple landscape in china for the sacred experience. The “meanings” and “experience” of landscape, by “Clarified” the Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism of the Chinese wisdom in connection with the local cultural context, which will Strengthen the identities of Buddhist temples of Local and this may be a significant implication that the Xi Qinglin temple to rebuilding and Promotion of Buddhist Culture.

*Keywords - Sacred experience, Temple landscape, Xi Qinglin temple of Guilin*

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## 1. Introduction

This research will argue how the issue of The Importance of the Sacred Atmosphere in Chinese Buddhist Temples. In fact, the definition of Chinese temple identities caused by the integration of three cultures (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) from the past to present has homogeneity. With the result that the identity connection between temple buildings and landscape is interrupted. (Showing in Fig.1)

Generally, the research of Chinese Buddhist temples focuses on building styles and construction methods, ignoring the identity of temple landscapes.

Choosing The Xi Qinglin temple of Guilin as a case, due to the government's rebuilding project at present, which will creating the identity of Chinese Buddhist temples landscape helps to Strengthen the experience of sacred to make up for religion identity.

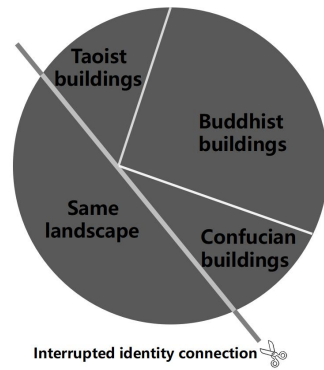


Figure 1. Homogenization of Buddhist Temple Landscape Identity, Picture Author drawing

## 2. Definition of the sacred experience

The Buddhist temple connecting the mundane world and the sacred world, which is a sacred place has seen spiritual spaces that have been "Sacred Experience" is considered by research. From the religious scientists Mircea Eliade's (1957) viewpoint, The religious place have caused an interruption in the mundane world that it is possible to connect with paradise. Religious places are often rich in aesthetic experience. The Greek philosopher Plotinus (205-270 CE) found that the architecture and art together constituted the sacred experience, and its meaning was represented by objects, forms, symbols and shapes.

Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism are two major sects of Chinese Buddhism and Temples in Guilin practice both Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism (showing in Fig.2). In the Chinese Buddhist temple, people can experience a unique culture, seek spiritual support and produce meaning in life. Experiencing Buddhist rituals and traditional customs in the sacred places of Buddhism strengthens the image of Buddhism, and meditation in Chinese temples promotes spiritual experience which is a way of Buddhism ideology to enlighten. The sacred experience has become a typical feature of Chinese Buddhist temples under the influence of multiculturalism. Which will considering local culture elements as part of the problem by the researcher.



Figure 2. Temples in Guilin practice both Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism, Picture Author drawing

## 3. Research Objectives

This research aims to Clarify the attributes of different factors and the relationship between the factors in the sacred experience of Chinese Buddhist temples and defining the components of the sacred sense of Chinese Buddhist temples.

Based on the above research, The purpose of this research is focused on similarities and differences in each other of Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism, Similarity study to investigate through knowledge of original Buddhism that reflects on the experiment of landscape formats. They are found in very different Buddhist landscape elements in a different study, even though conceptual design follows local culture. All collected

factors will be Classify and evaluate significant factors in order to set up a design framework for the process of a design experiment. The research outcome could be Creating a Sacred experience For the Chinese Local Buddhist Temple landscape. And this may be a significant way that rebuilding and promotion of religious heritage. Fig.3 is showing the research framework.

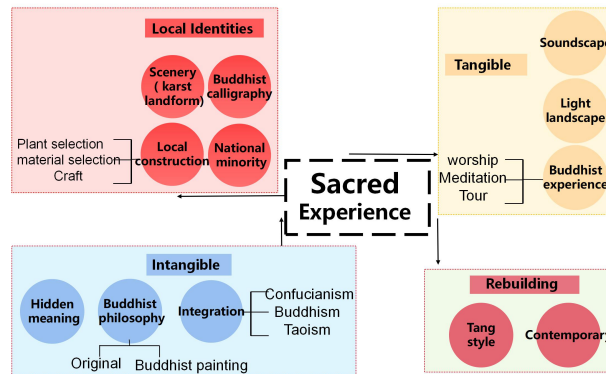


Figure 3. Research framework, Picture: Author drawing

#### 4. Research Methods

Research methods as follow:

- 1) Public questionnaire and expert questionnaire.
- 2) Collected Data Analysis and Design concept framework.
- 3) Design experiments and Design evaluation. Fig.4 is showing the questionnaire results and weight analysis.

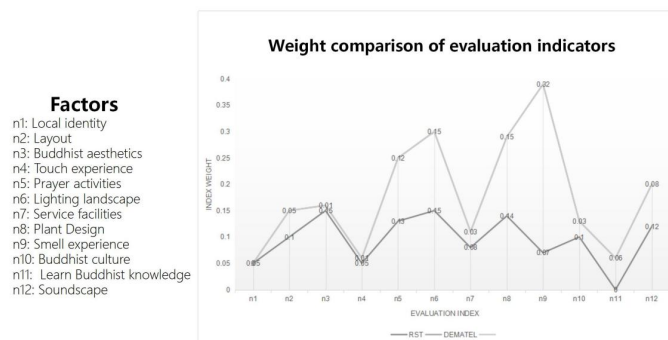


Figure 4. Questionnaire results and weight analysis, Picture: Author drawing

#### 5. Results of the Research

##### 5.1 Site Status of Guilin Xi Qinglin temple

In compliance with the design experiments conditions, the researcher has chosen a place of park land of 250,000 square meters situated in Guilin, Guangxi province. Site location: 109°E 45", 24°18"N, Time Zone: GMT+8, the design site is currently a city park. The site has scenic attractions due to Guilin's unique karst geographical environment. In 2017, in order to promote local culture, the Guilin government intends to rebuild Xi Qinglin Temple. Guilin Museum (old, deprecated) and Shuangyi waterside are two buildings in the site area. The existing landscape includes pavilions, mountain roads, lakes, stone bridges, and guidance systems with different design styles.

The archaeologically excavated site of Xi Qinglin Temple is located on the flat land in the middle and back of the site. Since the Tang Dynasty, this temple has been famous in southern China and is historically recorded. They are most important is the 243 grottoes of Buddha statues that was different sizes scattered in the mountains in different periods. Most of them are not documented but their identity supports the reconstruction of the Xi Qinglin Temple landscape. Fig.5 is showing the site status.

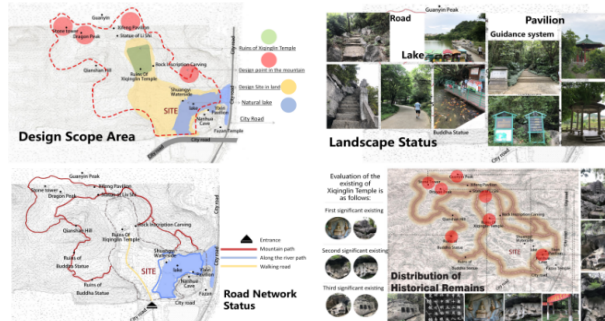


Figure 5. : Site status, Picture : Author drawing

### 5.2 Layout Concept

In layout concept, the developing and promotion methods of the Chinese local Temple sacred feeling by the researcher, and the ones of the four contents affecting the landscape layout of this case were also presented. Fig.6 is showing the Layout concept.



Figure 6. Layout concept, Picture : Author drawing

#### 5.2.1 Feng Shui

Chinese Feng Shui is a system of evaluating landscapes in order to find each significant location on which to arrange the right layout. In this design case, focus on the following: Orientation, Hide the wind, Hold the water and Significant place.

Surrounded by mountains around the design site, the significant location of Chinese ideal Feng Shui model coincides with the site of the Xi Qinglin Temple in the Tang Dynasty, which also confirms the application of Chinese Feng Shui theory in the layout of ancient temples. The researchers arranged the building's orientation, water system, and water flow direction according to the ideal Feng Shui model, and used tall trees to block unfavorable high winds, creating an ideal Feng Shui environment. Fig.7 is showing the Feng Shui Design Analysis.

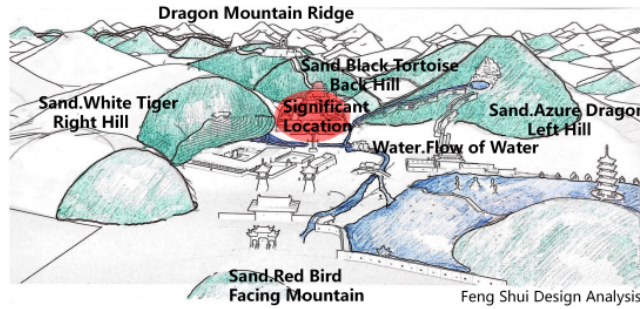


Figure 7. Feng Shui Design Analysis, Picture: Author drawing

### 5.2.2 Mount Meru

Chinese Feng Shui is the horizontal design concept of the landscape layout, while Mount Meru is the vertical concept. Researchers divided Mount Meru's model into three layers to adapt to the vertical layout of the landscape. The three vertical layers are: Paradise Layer, Meditation layer, and Sacred Layer.

Mount Meru describes the spatial structure of the Original Buddhist universe. This structure is presented in multiple spaces and dimensions. The implication of Buddhism is that the concept of different states of practice has been transformed into the design concept of creating a sacred feeling temple landscape. Fig.8 is showing the Three Layer of Mount Meru.

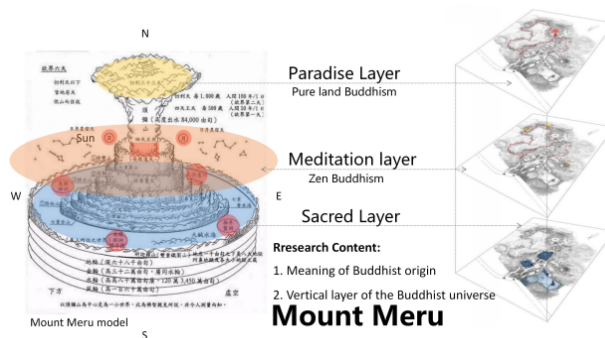


Figure 8. Three Layer of Mount Meru, Picture : Author drawing

### 5.2.3 Buddhist Painting

The Buddhist painting "A view of Buddhist Paradise" comes from Amitabha Sutra depicting the scene of Buddhist Paradise, and the researchers chose three elements of light landscape, soundscape and Buddhist experience for further research and application in the case. After fieldwork, Natural sound is composed of Tree sound and flowing sound, Wind chimes, Chanting, Bell and drum sound, and Buddhist festival music constitute the sound of the Chinese Buddhist temple landscape, It is different from the Theravada Buddhist temple. The sounds of animals such as birdsong, pigeon whistle, etc. or the sounds of other animals in the mountains have become the landscape design elements that this case focuses on.

In the light landscape design, there are two types of daylight and light landscapes. Night and day present completely different sacred experiences instead of just lamps. Sacred night tour is a new innovation point proposed by researchers to create sacred feelings. Three types of Buddhist temple landscape experience are: Pilgrimage Experience. Meditation. And Tour. From spirit to material, from Pure Land Buddhism to Zen

Buddhism, worship to meditation. The pilgrimage of the Pure Land Buddhism Sect continues to rise along the mountain road, from the Secular--Sacred--Guanyin--Buddha, which is in line with the final wish of the Pure Land Buddhism Sect to the Buddha [5]. Fig.9 is showing the Elemental Analysis of Buddha's Paradise.

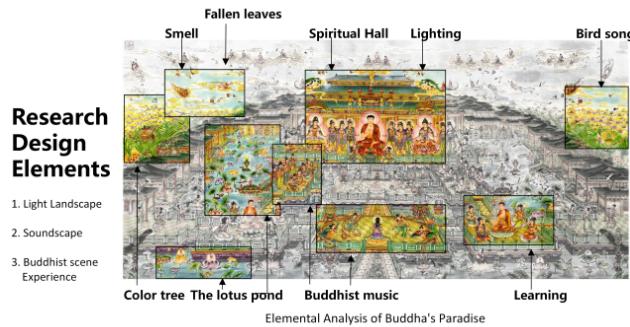


Figure 9. Elemental Analysis of Buddha's Paradise , Picture : Author drawing

### 5.2.4 Functional Area

Taking into account both history and contemporary is the principle of functional zoning in this case. The Conversion Area is located at the entrance of the temple gate. It has the function of parking and guiding people to enter. The Sacred Area was rebuilt at the former site of the Xi Qinglin Temple in the Tang Dynasty. The temple layout remained dim because of lacking historical records. The researchers chose a typical Tang temple layout form-"Galan Seven Halls". This assumption was recognized in the academic research of Tang temples. The Living Area is the area where the monks live, half hidden in the mountains and close to the Sacred Area. Practice Area and Pilgrimage Area Based on the activities of Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. Fig.10 is showing the Master Plan of Landscape.



Figure 10. Master Plan of Landscape, Picture : Author drawing

### 5.3 Pilgrimage ideal of Pure Land Buddhism Area

With an impression on the concept and experience of Chinese Buddhist temple, which is a philosophy knowledge that we have been learning from the Zen Buddhism, the researcher had a question in mind if it was possible to design an Pilgrimage experience. With the Culture and composition principles of Pure Land Buddhism,

The conceptual design of this piece was to apply the principles and myth of original Buddhism from which the information were collected from the study; for example, Mitabha Sutra, Mount Meru, Pilgrimage activities as

well as Buddhist style of the Tang Dynasty in order to the sacred feeling . The landscape form would be focused on the historic and Diversity and with the Religion, nationality, art, history and other elements are integrated into the this piece of work. The design outcome were three landscape points as follow;

Shadow Path of the Diamond Sutra is a mountain path to the next design point, Guanyin Waterfall. The corridor ceiling engraved with the Diamond Sutra means the three stages of Pure Land Buddhism practice. The Buddhist scriptures are projected to the visitors under the shadow of light physically. Fig.11 is showing the Design concept.

Guanyin (a Bodhisattva) Waterfall Located at the end of Shadow Path of the Diamond Sutra in the middle of the mountain, Guanyin is a goddess of Mahayana who helps everyone, and freely to between the paradise and mortal world in Chinese Buddhism.

Big Buddha is located on the mountain peak of the site. The white stupa of the Tang Dynasty and the local colored trees are planted around it. Pilgrims here feel the sacred feeling from paradise. Fig.12 is showing the Design outcome.



Figure 11. Design concept, Picture : Author drawing

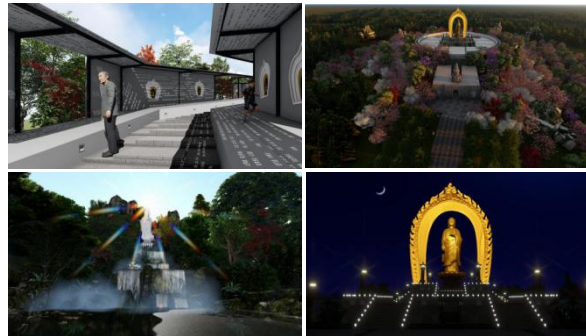


Figure 12. : Design outcome, Picture : Author drawing

#### 5.4 Meditation Practice of Zen Buddhism Area

Zen thought believes that practice in this life is different from Pure Land Buddhism. It focuses on the practice of meditation to understand Zen philosophy from life.

The design concept for this topic show Zen Buddhism between three main factors that composed with historic existing, Meditation Practice and meaning of original Buddhism and how to integrate those elements into sacred experience of landscape as follow;

Zhi Yue Corridor is a space for meditation that the concept came from the corridor element of the painting "A vision of the Buddhist paradise" depicting the original Buddhist paradise. The courtyard atrium designed the Buddha in the water, half above the water and half below the ground, and opened the Chinese character 佛 (Buddha) meaning people on the left "亻" and the right "弗" meaning is -non, which confirms the philosophical thought of Zen practice in this life, everyone is a Buddha.

Buhhda Mudras wall, Five kind of Buhhda Mudras in China express rich Buddhist meaning. Due to the identity of Guilin, it was obviously be influenced by some local Ethnic ornaments and Rock inscription of Buddhist temple landscape of Guilin, These two local elements of design will be complied into Buhhda Mudras wall. Fig.13 is showing the Design concept.

Lights on fishing raft & Buddha's light , the was 2 design elements which was Lights on fishing raft that identity of Guilin from Lijiang river and was Candlestick that was being Tang dynasty from out of Xi Qinglin temple site. These two local elements of Guilin was been designed identify Lighting of Buddha statue to identifying. Existing 98 Group of 243 Buddha Statues on the site in order to create intangible network for protect and connect site heritage. Fig.14 is showing the Design outcome.

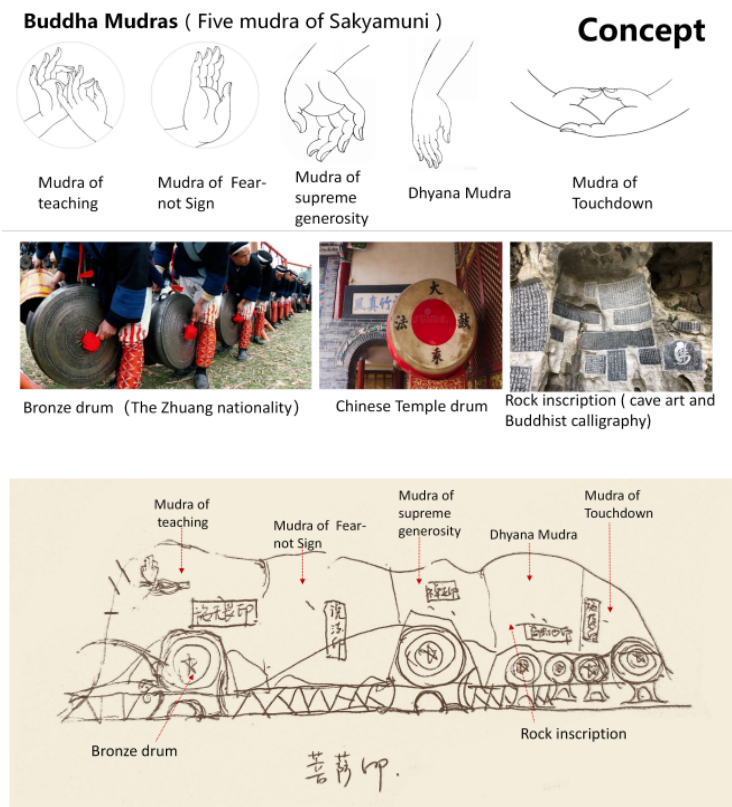


Figure 13. Design concept, Picture : Author drawing



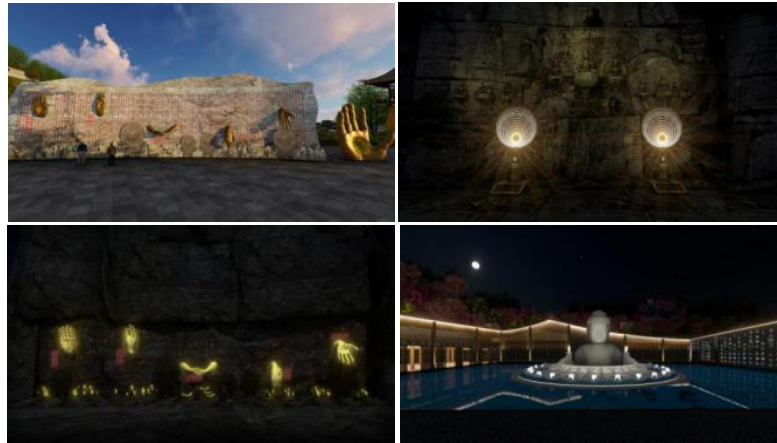


Figure 14. Design outcome, Picture : Author drawing

## 6. Conclusion

This research had been investigated through the development of the Buddhist temple landscape of Guilin from past to present and found out that the differences of type sect reflect the diversity of each identity of temple landscape. Beyond those differences, there was a similarity that is the meaning of Chinese Buddhism which reflected culture by original Buddhism. The researcher focused on the tangible and intangible values of the interrelationship between three main factors, (Existing, local identity, and Buddhist meaning). Then, analyzed and combined them in-depth, to create the design way of sacred experience into the new landscape of Chinese Buddhist temple for promoting Buddhism. In conclusion, The rebuilding of Xi Qinglin Temple is seeking way for creating a sacred experience that creates changes that reflected the Buddhist wisdom and Cultural integration.

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